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SUMMARIES OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY SELECTED NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN AND OTHER AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES

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[1] Summaries are reproduced without formal editing by the UNCCD secretariat.

Country Parties are listed by date of ratification of the Convention.

PORTUGAL

The National Action Programme to Combat Desertification was approved on 17 June 1998, and is the result of a widespread participation by agents involved and interested in the issue of desertification, mainly from the most affected regions, in a total of about 2200 people, in strict compliance with the spirit of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

We are now ready to begin the implementation of the NAP, as key requirements were already satisfied:

1. Campaigns to raise public awareness on the issue of the desertification;
2. Creation of conditions for a strong participation of public and private entities;
3. Integrated interdepartmental and multi-disciplinary cooperation, from the drafting of policies up to the preparation of the implementation of specific actions;
4. Creation of a National Committee to Coordinate the NAP and to monitor its implementation;
5. Creation of a National Desertification Observatory, working closely with the National Committee, that will make possible the monitoring and the assessment of the programme's implementation.

A National Coordination Group was created in December 1996 to elaborate the NAP, presided by the Focal Point, including experts from eight ministries, several institutions of the civil service, some of the central departments and others from regional services, for a total of about 30 people. This Group was responsible for the preparation of a synthesis document on "Causes and consequences of desertification in Portugal", which was prepared to give to the public a scientific and technical background for discussion.

The public working sessions were held at the regional level with the participation of the media, universities, environmental NGO's, experts from official departments, teachers from several education levels and individuals concerned with the problem. A Scientific Council was also created to support the National Coordination Group. This Group was composed of 12 experts covering areas such as climate, soil, water, rural development, economy and sociology.

ITALY

The UNCCD has been ratified by the Italian Parliament with the Law n.170 in 1997.

In September 1997, the Italian President of the Council has instituted the National Committee to combat drought and desertification. The Committee has been working on the implementation and the dissemination of knowledge aimed at combating desertification in Italy. Its most important activity has been the involvement of the institutions and the research organizations to coordinate the political action to fight drought and soil degradation and the social, economic, energetic, environmental and cultural aspects of the Mediterranean basin.

In order to implement the UNCCD the Italian Committee has signed several Memoranda of Understanding with different partners: the Food and Agricultural Organization, the Ente Teatrale Italiano, ANPA and Asinara National Park, Fondo

The Government has played its role in the approval of the CIPE deliberation that clearly underlines the different role that the Government and the Regions play in the fight against desertification and drought and foresees the strategic and operative importance of the Regions in the enforcement of the UNCCD with specific programmes at local level.

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The Republic of Moldova is a small (33.8 thousand sq. km) and densely populated (129 men/sq. km) country, situated between west border of the Ukraine and east border of Romania. The agricultural sector predominating causes high dependence of the Moldova economy upon weather-climate conditions. In combination with human induced factors droughts rate increase in the areas with natural precipitations deficiency leads to the soils degradation - desertification.

The main document, defining aims, priorities and basic directions of sustainable country development, is "Strategical reference points of socio-economic development of Moldova up to 2005", approved by the Government Enactment (1998). Integration of ecological requirements into sectoral policy and forming of the ecological consciousness at all levels are called as one of the strategical priorities. The Government developed project of National Strategy of Sustainable Development "Moldova-21" (1999).

To the main negative factors, influencing national safety of the country, the Strategy attributes the following: reduced financial possibilities of selection and implementation of the above strategy; real economic depression and ineffective natural resources utilization management; political instability; investments deficit; shadow economy at scale.

The first strategical document in the nature protection area was the long-term Complex Environment Protection and Rational Nature Resources Utilization Programme up to 2005 (1997). Among its major priorities it is necessary to note maintenance of the soils fertility by implementation of the hydrotechnical anti-erosion measures, eroded lands fertility rehabilitation, forest amelioration measures, anchoring and rehabilitation of the landslides.

As milestones in nature protection planning and forecasting are the National Strategical Programme (1996) and the National Action Plan (1997) in the field of the environment protection, elaborated and adopted in accordance with resolutions of the Conference held in Rio de Janeiro with financial support of the World Bank.

The Ministry of Environment and Territory Development is a body authorized to be engaged in the nature protection activity on behalf of the Government. It is responsible for the implementation of relevant United Nations conventions. The UNCCD implementation is coordinated by the National Commission to Combat Desertification (NC), set up in 2000, which is attached to the above Ministry. In its activity NC is guided by the mandate on the UNCCD implementation, approved in March 2000 by the Minister of the Environment and Territory Development. The NC organized translation of the text of the UNCCD in Romanian, some UNCCD materials were translated from English to Romanian and their adapted to Moldova conditions version was published in popular version.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova promotes the creation of necessary institutional, organizational and legal frames to fulfil the UNCCD requirements. The Ministry of Economy and Reforms informed districts administration about main NAP elements and defined main terms of its implementation.

On the whole in Moldova there are more than 30 legislative enactments on the field of environment protection and nature resources utilization. All of them represent basic state strategy in the above area, but they do not exceed the frames of so called "administrative regulating instruments" or "regulating for command and control ". As recent years experience shows, it is necessary to supplement present legislation with normative economy enactments. In this respect there are already some developed and approved legislative enactments, directed to the coming into force of the principle "Polluter pays".

Existing legislation envisages population information and it's participation in decision-making in the field of environmental protection. Constitution of the Republic of Moldova and other laws envisage the right of population to access to information and to healthy environment. The Republic of Moldova was the first state, which ratified Information Access, Public Participation in the Adoption of Environment Issues Resolutions Convention (Orhus, Denmark, 1998).

Process of decentralizing central bodies responsibilities including nature protection area is continuing with the aim to expand responsibilities of the local bodies. Local public bodies have the following rights and obligations: approvements of the local nature resources utilization limits; supervision and control in the field of utilization and regeneration of the nature resources; authorization of the nature resources utilization; development and implementation of measures to protect or regenerate nature resources; taking stock of the nature resources.

At present in the Republic of Moldova, mainly in the towns function more than 200 non-governmental ecological organizations (NGOs) and their branches, actively participating in environment protection, including combat against desertification. Most of them aim at the resolving of different environment protection problems, but only few contribute to the implementation of practical steps to combat desertification.

The main tasks of NAP to combat desertification induced by drought are the following:

- creation on the whole Republic's territory of a green ecological frame of forest belts and bushes for amelioration of hydrological and hydrothermical agricultural lands regimes;
- development of norms and terms of agricultural crops irrigation depending on hydrothermical regime of territory;
- introducing into the crop rotation drought resistant ones (asparcet, winter wheat, sorghum for the grain, Sudan grass, Italian ralgrass, winter barley);
- substantiation of rational nature resources utilization, directed towards stabilization of the landscapes ecological balance in the presence of droughty climate;

- setting up the regional drought monitoring in the frame of National Hydrometeorological Service and development of national agroclimate potential usage depending on desertification processes;
- minimization of drought consequences by forecasting and planning measures for mitigation of their effects on human induced and natural ecosystems.

Among planned measures it is envisaged improvement of institutional and legal base; development and implementation of socio-economic and demographic regional strategies, local action plans for the areas severely affected by droughts and desertification; development of methods for assessment of desertification levels and registration of the drought affected territory parameters; development and implementation of measures to prevent and combat droughts and various forms of soils and ecosystems degradation; implementation of the economic and legal mechanisms system for regulation and stimulation measures for minimizing desertification consequences and combating it; implementation of the sustainable agriculture systems; inventory, zoning, monitoring and implementation of measures to prevent and combat landslides.

The Republic of Moldova is a party of Danube Convention and from 1991 to 1999 it implemented Subregional Programme in the framework of the above Convention partially linked with desertification prevention issues. Said implementation is supposed to take ten years. Major priority measures are oriented at restoring ecological balance of the territories, subjected to desertification processes.

The total costs of activities outlined by the Action Plan are estimated at 568 mln.lei. Measures for ecological rehabilitation of soils and managing agricultural production from the position of sustainability require considerable funds (almost 50 per cent of the total sum for the former and 47 per cent for the latter). The sources of financing are: budget allocations - 2.7 per cent of total costs; own means of economic subjects - 91; contributions by foreign financial institutions, different donors, including foreign ones - 3.6 per cent, extra budgetary funds - 2.7 per cent.

Environment status data and trends of its changing are contained in the following documents: annual environment quality reports, developed by Ministry of the Environment and Territory Development; annual reports on the population health and hygiene status, developed by Ministry of Public Health; periodic field reports on the status of some nature elements such as: land resources (soils), water quality, forest resources, etc; data of the Department for Statistical and Sociological Studies on toxic waste, investments into environment protection.

Due to economical problems present methodology and technology, level of laboratories equipment in the institutional frames do not conform to the international standards. In the conditions of the Republic of Moldova at national level methodology of complex monitoring of the processes of desertification combat is being developed, including: solving the problem of ecological monitoring, based on decentralization of functions and setting up desertification monitoring subsystem; methodical provision of the monitoring - National Ecological Institute, Academy of Sciences; technical provision of monitoring - Ministry of Environment and Territory Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Processing Industry, Ministry of Transport and Communication; creation of material base, monitoring data collection and processing - competent ministries; data integration, processing, coordination of actions in this field.

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